Trope: Friends To Lovers (Hannigram AU)

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Trope: Friends To Lovers (Hannigram AU)

by Sirenja (orphan_account), TigerPrawn

Summary

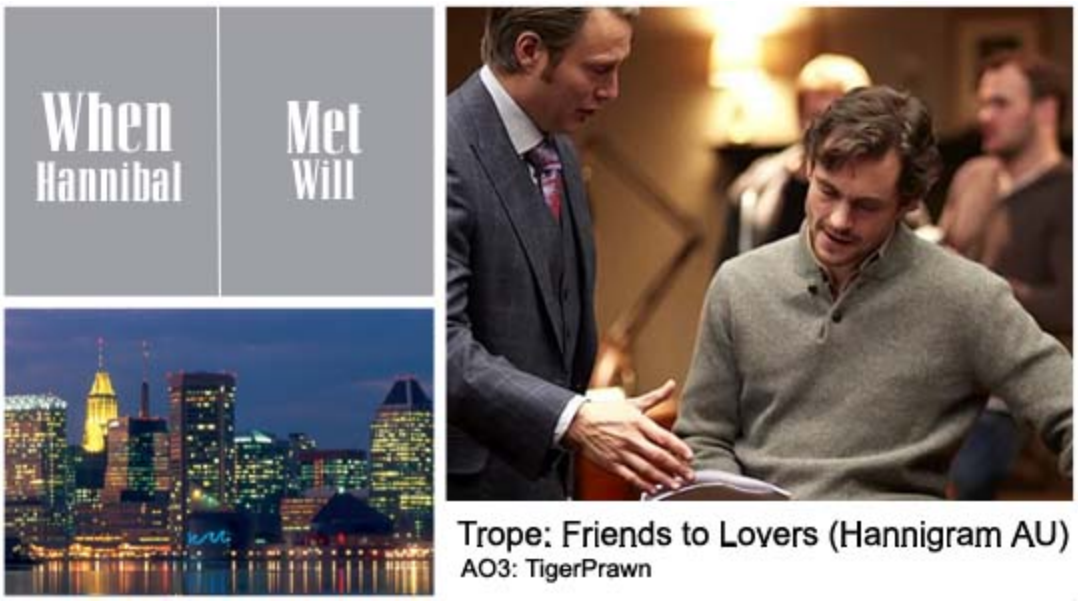
Will Graham is an omega in an alpha's world - he's used to not always being taken seriously and has no time for alpha bullshit. The last thing he expected was to make friends with an alpha! Sure Hannibal Lecter is interesting and clever, he even treats omegas with respect, but Will isn't planning on anything more than friendship. But after they unintentionally end up sleeping together they need to work out if they can still be friends in the morning.

In collaboration with Sirenja's Courting gifset - LINK TO GIFSET

Notes

beta'd by the amazing Victorine - thanks lovely <3

May



Will Graham took a steadying breath before entering the lecture hall. He looked only at the lectern as he walked forward, placed his coffee down and let out a breath. The lights were already dimmed so he picked up the remote and flicked on the first slide.

“Every killer has a specific design…” He didn’t need to look at his notes or the slides, other than for occasional emphasis. He gave a version of this lecture at the Academy, and he’d guest lectured it elsewhere too, at other academic institutions. But he’d only done these public lectures a couple of times and he wasn’t a fan. Always full of alphas.

So was the Academy, but it was different being their teacher. He had the student’s respect - at least by the end of the first semester. But here, in this public setting it was too easy to be viewed as some jumped-up omega. Fact was his department, at least, had his back and he was taken seriously as a teacher. At these public lectures it felt like half the alphas there either thought it was cute that he had found himself in such a line of work, or didn’t take him seriously at all - he was just a token omega.

When the lecture was over, he started to gather his papers, not looking up at the audience as they filed out or lingered to speak with each other. He was about to leave when an alpha stopped him.

“Agent Graham, very *interesting* to finally see you in action.” He looked up at Paul Krendler, someone he had made a good job of avoiding since their first few meetings at the FBI.

“Just Mr Graham, you know that Krendler.” Will smiled, falsely. He knew this was the alpha’s attempt to unsettle him and put him on the back foot.

“Oh yes. Omegas don’t make Agent.” Krendler’s smile was cruel. Will wasn’t surprised the man was still unbonded considering this was how he treated omegas who shunned his

interest.

“An oversight I believe.” The words, in a rich accent, were spoken by a well-dressed alpha who had come up behind Krendler. “After all, if omegas can be serial killers, why not their catchers? Perhaps Mr Graham would have been able to assist you in your pursuit of Francis Dolarhyde? Perhaps the omega would have been captured before committing so many murders as he did.”

Will hid the smirk as he enjoyed the sight of Kendler going red - equal measures rage and embarrassment. The other alpha stepped forward and held out his hand to shake - Will accepted it.

“Hannibal Lecter. I wanted to tell you I enjoyed your lecture Mr Graham.” The alpha smiled and Will was surprised at how genuine it seemed - not mocking and not trying to get in his pants - both a refreshing relief.

“You have an interest in the subject matter?” Will asked politely, noting that Krendel was clenching his jaw - he let out a huff before walking off.

“Yes, I have consulted with the FBI on several cases. With Agent Starling?”

“Oh! You’re the shrink that helped her bring in Buffalo Bill?” Will made the connection.

“Ah yes, that would be me.” The Doctor smiled politely and Will nodded, realising he may have been a little rude calling the man a shrink. He was set to apologise when the doctor continued - “I’m very interested in your theory on the use of empathy in catching criminals. Do you have time to discuss it?”

Will shook his head. “I don’t right now, but if you give me your email address I can suggest some reading?”

Lecter looked like he was going to say something but instead smiled and nodded and handed over his card. The guy had so many letters after his name it was amazing they all fit. Will gave a curt nod as he took it and promised to send the reading as soon as he had office hours.

June

Chapter by TigerPrawn

“Hey.” Will greeted Doctor Lecter with a smile when he saw the man enter the coffee shop. They had emailed a few times and Will was pretty interested in talking theories with the guy. He could count on one hand all the FBI alphas outside of his department that didn’t think he was just there as a token omega or because he’d slept his way into the position. Truth was, he was damn good at his job. This fact more than supported his theories on empathy and its potential applications in field work. Given that empathy was something very few alphas could be accused of, it followed that omegas should be allowed to work in the field.

Lecter smiled at him and approached. “Can I get you something?”

“No, I’m good - I have an Americano on order,” Will replied.

Hannibal gave a nod and excused himself to go order his own drink. And that was… pretty cool. Will couldn’t remember the last time he’d been in this sort of situation, even with colleagues, without his companions going all overboard - set on being the ones to *provide*. Some of them hadn’t even let him order for himself and had got what they thought he might enjoy - because omegas don’t drink strong, black coffee.

He hadn’t known what to expect from the man, having met him only briefly, and exchanged a few emails, but the fact that he had immediately gone against every expectation Will had learned to have of alphas was a good start.

Lecter returned and took the seat opposite him, which tweaked a small smile on Will’s lips.

“I’ve done something amusing?” the doctor asked.

Will realised what he had done and shook his head, appraising the alpha for a moment before deciding to be honest. “Well, you’re the first alpha in a long time that hasn’t taken the seat next to me.”

“Ah.” Hannibal made the realisation and then gave a friendly smile. “I didn’t think it would be appropriate, as we are only acquaintances.”

“You’re the only one.” Will chuckled. “The stories I could tell.”

Hannibal’s returning smile was warm. “Yes. I’ve lived in this country quite some time and yet I find myself often surprised by the culture here.”

The waitress brought over the drinks and conversation quickly segued into Will’s empathy theory and the potential practical application. Will started off maybe more defensive than he needed to be, from experience, but soon warmed into it once he realised that Lecter was treating him as an equal with valued knowledge and experience.

With Lecter wanting to read more and asking whether he could sit in a few of the Academy lectures, Will found himself actually liking the alpha. He could really see the possibility of friendship, which was nice. Few alphas were interested in a friendship with an omega - what was there to gain from such an exchange when they were considered less than equal? He huffed at the thought before he realised and Lecter gave him a quizzical look.

“Something amusing?” The alpha raised a brow as he sipped his coffee.

“No, I… I was just thinking about friendship,” Will admitted.

Hannibal nodded his understanding. “It’s nice to make friends with those with similar interests and passions.”

Will chuckled. “You realize, of course, that we can never be friends.” The words came out only as half serious and Will wasn’t sure how much he really meant them.

“No?” Hannibal’s smile was lopsided as he quirked his brow again.

“What I'm saying is - and this is not a come-on - is that alphas and omegas can't be friends because sex always gets in the way.” The words fell out of Will’s mouth, and although he kind of meant them, heat rose in his cheeks a little at having spoken so freely with someone he barely knew, much less an alpha. Even more surprised at how comfortable he felt, how sure he was that Lecter would be amused and take it with good cheer.

“That's not true. I have a number of omega friends and I can assure you there is no sex involved.” Hannibal’s smile was a little amused and encouraging - something of banter about his tone, which Will couldn’t help but latch onto.

“No you don't.” Will grinned, shaking his head. “You only think you do.”

Hannibal chuckled and frowned. “You say I'm having sex with these omegas without my knowledge?”

“No…” Will went for mock serious for a moment as he took a sip of his coffee. “What I'm saying is they all want to have sex with you.” He followed quickly with, “seriously, not a come-on,” which he was sure already went without saying, because Lecter must know from the two hours they had been sat there, that he wasn’t the stereotypical omega and he wasn’t prone to fawning over successful, handsome alphas. He considered, briefly, introducing the alpha to his neighbour Molly, but she might be a bit too casual for someone as sophisticated as Hannibal.

“They do not,” Hannibal scoffed, though he had taken a moment to reply - probably thinking it over.

“Do too.” Will gave a sage nod and a smile.

“How do you know?” Hannibal took his turn at mock seriousness.

“Because no omega can be friends with an alpha that they find attractive. They always want to have sex with them. Didn’t you know? That’s all omegas want deep down.” Will shrugged.

He didn’t believe the stereotype, but then he had no alpha friends in order to test the theory.

Hannibal nodded his understanding as though they were still talking academic theories. “So you're saying that an omega can be friends with an alpha he finds unattractive?” He queried the hypothesis.

Will shook his head whilst he shrugged. “Nah, they pretty much want to nail them too.”

Another interested nod. “I see. What if the alpha doesn’t want to have sex with the omega?”

Will raised an immediate eyebrow at the preposterous idea that all alphas didn’t want to sleep with every omega they encountered. He continued the banter with a shrug - “Doesn't matter because the sex thing is already out there so the friendship is ultimately doomed and that is the end of the story.”

“I see. And so, what do you suggest?” Hannibal asked, indicating them both with a finger wagged between them.

Will lifted his cup to his smile. “Just keep it professional.” He shrugged before taking a sip.

“Or we could socialize, like adults. God forbid we become friendly.” Hannibal countered with a smile more genuine than before.

Will grinned. He hadn’t had this sort of friendship - with easy and cheerful banter - since before his secondary puberty when he presented as omega. “I don't find you that interesting.” he replied with a grin.

September

Chapter by TigerPrawn

Will walked into Hannibal's office and dumped his bag on the chaise, only realising he hadn't knocked when he turned and saw the doctor making notes at his desk. It was pretty late so he had assumed Hannibal wouldn't have a patient, before he'd barged in.

Hannibal looked at him for a moment, a look that said *if we weren't friends* or maybe *if you were anybody else!*

Will appreciated that. It was nice to be accepted for the little shit that he often was, especially by someone who had no reason to put up with his behaviour.

"Something on your mind Will?" Hannibal asked with genuine concern before he went back to his notes.

"Ugh. Just… Krendler is an asshole," Will blustered.

Hannibal didn't look up as he replied "Ah, the ongoing battle."

"Oh, it gets worse," Will grumped and dropped down into a chair, where he waited until Hannibal had finished his work.

The alpha put down his pen and rose from his desk, walking over and taking the seat opposite Will before he asked, "What has he done now?"

Will sighed. He'd previously told Hannibal all about the other alpha - Krendler had propositioned him at their first meeting and Will had done a good job of avoiding him since as they didn't work in the same department. But since Krendler had come to his public lecture, he had stepped up his obsession and seemed to be seeking Will out whenever he could. Most of it was just creepy but - "I had to attend a staff evening last night. Long ass meeting followed by drinks to keep everyone happy. Fucking Krendler turns up - it's not even anything he is attached to - and everyone is getting drunk. I only planned on staying as long as I reasonably had to, and the guy corners me in the bathroom as I'm about to leave."

Hannibal frowned at that. "What happened?"

"He tried to get fresh," Will huffed. "So I kneed him in the groin. And now, I have a meeting with my boss. Because, god forbid I turn down an alpha."

"It may have been the physical assault they have an issue with, Will," Hannibal reasoned.

"Well of course it is," Will snapped. "But what was I supposed to do?" He sighed. "I'm sorry, that was rude. I'm sure it's going to be fine. My boss is great, she's a beta and knows how some alphas can be. Besides she's met Krendler so that works in my favour - guy creeps everyone out."

Hannibal gave a reassuring smile. “Well, perhaps dinner then? I am sure you’ve not eaten properly today, as usual, so perhaps a fortifying meal will put you in good stead for tomorrow.”

“McDonald's?” Will asked with a grin.

“I was thinking something a little more…” Hannibal trailed off thoughtfully and Will chuckled. In the time they had been friends, he had never known Hannibal to have fast food and the idea intrigued him.

“Ever think you are too picky Hannibal?” Will teased.

“I think of it more as being a perfectionist, though I admit that can sometimes be a fault.” Hannibal smiled. “And so, dinner?”

“Urgh, I wasn’t kidding about the McDonald’s. I need to grab something quick - I need to get back and feed the dogs.” Will sighed and pulled himself out of the chair. “But, we’re still on for the weekend? I’ll bring the fish and you bring the culinary skills.”

Hannibal smiled and gave a curt nod as Will headed to the door. “I look forward to it.

November

Chapter by TigerPrawn

“All I’m saying Hannibal, is that maybe you’ve done something to piss off your neighbours? No one else’s houses got egged like this.” Will’s amusement was waning as he tried to use the scraper on the mixture of flour, eggs and even some toilet paper that was over the walls and windows. “Look, I know we’re friends, but… don’t you have any other friends you can pick on for shit like this? Butch alpha friends who want to get their hands dirty?”

Hannibal looked up and smiled at him from his place on the stoop, scrubbing with a big stiff brush and soapy water that was probably freezing by now. “I could say something deliberately inflammatory by telling you I asked you over my other friends because I wanted an omega’s touch on the cleaning. But of course, I won’t.” Hannibal’s grin was smug and Will appreciated the banter despite narrowing his eyes at the alpha before continuing with the scraping.

When they’d cleaned up the mess - which Will was pretty certain was probably a bunch of local teens who wanted to use Halloween as an excuse to irk the kooky doctor - they went inside. Will’s hands were about to drop off from the cold and his cheeks burned as they walked into the warm house.

“Coffee?” Hannibal asked, as they walked to the kitchen and Will made himself at home on one of the high stools as usual.

“Coffee?” he repeated with mock indignation. “After that I’m expecting a three course meal and some good wine.”

Hannibal chuckled. “I anticipated.” He set a plate of fresh, and likely homemade, pastries in front of Will. Will dug in without hesitation and gave a thumbs up when Hannibal held up the coffee pot.

When it was ready Hannibal poured out coffee, knowing by now exactly how Will took it and making it to perfection. Will breathed in the scent of it before taking a gulp to wash down the pastry.

“So…” Will started before taking another bite and then talking with his mouthful. “That public lecture I told you about, the one Doctor Bloom is giving, is next Friday. It’s about crimes committed by omegas - feeds into a lot of the stuff we’ve been talking about. You coming?”

Hannibal cleared his throat and looked a little uncomfortable.

“What? What did I say?” Will swallowed the pastry and frowned, concerned.

“I… I already have plans on Friday,” Hannibal said as he looked away and busied himself with cleaning up.

Will shrugged. “That’s a shame. I could take a dictaphone?”

“Perhaps.” Hannibal’s tone was weird and he seemed uncharacteristically edgy.

Why was he being so weird? Maybe he had social plans and didn’t want to seem rude by excluding Will - though that had never been an issue before… Maybe he had a date? Will mused and chuckled. “What’s up? You got a hot date?”

Hannibal turned back to him and looked both sheepish and embarrassed. “Yes… I…”

Will frowned. “OK… why are you being… were you worried about telling me?” Realisation dawned and Will was a little confused. “Why?”

Hannibal let out a sigh and placed his hands on the counter and leaned forward, his head bowed. “I didn't want it to be awkward. After all, we… we spend a lot of time together, we're close-”

“Because we're friends Hannibal!” Will cut Hannibal off before he had the chance to make even more assumptions. “I thought we were friends? But if you think I've been hanging around all this time waiting for you to notice me-”

“No,” Hannibal interrupted firmly. “Not at all. I just…” he sighed. “I'm sorry. I don't know why I thought it… I just thought it might change things between us and I didn't want that.”

Will let out the anger that had been building on a long breath and then chuckled. “I guess I'll be coming over here a lot less, but… and that means they will have to help you with the shitty odd jobs like scraping Halloween crap off the front of your house.”

Hannibal let out what seemed to be a sigh of relief and then smiled.

December

Chapter by TigerPrawn

“Hannibal…” Will choked the word on a sob.

“Will? What's wrong?” Hannibal’s concern carried in his tone. And Will found himself clutching the phone tighter to his ear.

“It's Winston… can you… can you come pick me up? I'm at the vets. He's…” Will stopped again. *He's okay*. He had to remind himself. The vet said he was going to be okay. But that hadn't stopped the flood of pent up emotion Will had been carrying for the last three hours.

“What's the address? I'm coming now,” Hannibal said firmly. It was the most alpha he'd ever sounded and Will found himself thankful for having called. He was strung out and needed a friend who could help pull him together.

He hadn't seen much of Hannibal since the alpha had started dating Brian Zeller - he got it, no omega was going to be comfortable with scenting some other strange omega on their prospective alpha. Hannibal had worked with the omega on a few cases, he was some sort of lab guy. And he seemed… okay, though weirdly not right for Hannibal. But it wasn’t his place to comment and he certainly wasn’t going to say anything that might upset one of the few close friendships he had. Even so, he couldn’t say he was surprised or sorry when they broke it off. But that had been a couple of weeks ago, and he still hadn’t seen much of Hannibal - it felt like something between them had fundamentally changed, which got him down a bit.

And yet, it was Hannibal he’d called as soon as he’d had a chance, once Winston was out of surgery.

“Will!” He looked up as Hannibal strode towards him across the waiting room. “What do you need? Shall I take you home or do you need to be here?”

Will felt like he’d been getting himself back together until then but Hannibal’s care undid him a little. The fact that he knew well enough not to immediately ask what had happened, when Will had been struggling to prepare himself for just that, broke something inside Will.

He swallowed down the lump in his throat but his voice was shaky when he replied - “I… I want to stay, but they are keeping him in awhile, I… I should go home.”

Hannibal nodded. “Did you drive?” His tone and expression were totally alpha - all business, no emotion - but his eyes showed the swirl of concern and care.

Will shook his head. “I… I couldn’t. I couldn’t drive and hold onto him. I called a cab.”

Hannibal nodded again and waited whilst Will stood, he grabbed Will’s bloodied jacket from the chair and folded it over his arm, and then followed behind as Will led the way out.

Will was silent in the car, and Hannibal didn't push, just asked him if he had food at the house, if he wanted them to stop and pick something up. At that Will realised he hadn't eaten most of the day and was feeling shaky and exhausted.

"McDonald's?" Will asked. Any other time he might have said it as a joke, but he actually just wanted some crap - something quick and easy and… strangely he knew that Hannibal wasn't going to say no. In fact the alpha said nothing until he pulled into the drive-thru and turned to Will to ask what he wanted.

Will had waited until they got back to his place to eat his burger, not wanting to stink out Hannibal's car more than it already had, even though Hannibal had insisted that it would be fine. Hannibal came into the house with him, letting the rest of his dogs out for a run and then made Will sit in the kitchen whilst he plated the burger and fries, and then sat next to him.

"You don't… you can go home Hannibal, I don't want to put you out more than I already have."

"Will." Hannibal breathed out his name with something like gentle exasperation. "You're one of my closest friends, and you need someone with you right now. Tell me someone else I can call for you and I will, otherwise I shall remain."

Will took in a shaky breath and nodded his acceptance, before biting into the burger. After he finished, Hannibal made them coffee and they relocated to the lounge and sat.

"It was a bear trap." Will forced the words out, anguished as they were. "Some asshole had set up a bear trap in the woods. I didn't see it in the snow… It damn near snapped his leg clean off. The vet had to amputate… he…" Will choked back a sob. "He lost so much blood. I..."

Hannibal reached across and settled a hand on his leg. "I'm sorry Will. If there's anything I can do."

Will was touched by the sincerity. He had missed Hannibal more than he'd let himself admit. Maybe in part because he hated to admit the calming presence of an alpha had impacted on his life. But in that moment it was all he could think of and the words fell out of his mouth -

"Would you… would you stay with me? Just hold me?" He followed it up quickly with, "I understand if you don't want to, I mean, we're just friends. I just… it's ok, forget I asked."

Hannibal smiled softly and squeezed his leg. "Of course, Will. Please… I understand."

And Will knew he did. He was a good man, he was a great doctor - he wouldn't see Will as a stereotypical weak omega for this, and he wouldn't refuse him as his friend. Will was suddenly so grateful for their friendship - he couldn't imagine what he would have done without Hannibal there.

They finished the coffee and let the dogs back in. Once they were settled Will decided it would be best to relocate to his room. It would be more comfortable for Hannibal, he was sure, than hanging out in a room full of dogs and hair. He'd already endured McDonald's for

him. But once in the room Will felt a little self conscious. He rarely slept up here and neither he or Hannibal had ever been in each other's bedrooms. He wasn't sure this was really appropriate but then Hannibal rested a comforting hand on his shoulder and he found himself moving steadily to the bed. He lay down and felt the bed dip behind him as Hannibal spooned up against his back, the scent of an alpha so close relaxing him more than he had any right to be.

*

Will woke with a start, his nightmare full of blood. Bones being crushed in the jaws of a giant bear. He felt the sweat sticking his clothes to him, felt the cold shiver over his skin and the sob that tried to push up his throat. And then he felt strong arms wrap around him.

"You're dreaming Will. Are you alright?" Hannibal spoke the words against the back of his neck and it made every hair stand on end.

Perhaps it was the nightmare, or the closeness, the need for more closeness and a deeper comfort - but Will found himself turning in Hannibal's arms and pressing a hard kiss to the alpha's lips. Hannibal reciprocated, opening to him immediately and deepening the kiss for a moment, before sharply drawing back and studying Will's face.

When the alpha said nothing, just searching his face for some sort of answer, Will offered - "I… I'm sorry. I just needed… I needed someone… some comfort…" He started to pull away wondering if he had ruined their friendship forever. He'd never really thought of Hannibal like that before - never considered it really true of them what he had said about sex getting in the way. But there, in that moment, his scent was so good and his hard body curling against Will's had felt so safe and welcoming.

Hannibal didn't say anything, his only response to lean in and gently kiss Will's lips in return, as he tightened his arms around the omega. Will melted into his arms, and into the kiss - giving himself over to the alpha and allowing himself to be taken care of.

Hannibal never stopped kissing him: his lips; his jaw; his shoulders; his hips - as he helped remove every item of clothing. It became a blur of sensation to Will until they were both naked on the bed and he finally took a moment to look at the alpha. His body was firm with an impressive cock and chest hair that Will wanted to nuzzle into. His breath hitched at the sight, but he had no time to consider further before Hannibal pressed him down to the bed and settled between his legs. He continued kissing the underside of Will's jaw and then mouthing down his neck in a facsimile of a bite that was not to come, but even so Will's cock jumped against Hannibal's stomach.

Hannibal continued to kiss him and not much else until Will whined and spread his legs further apart, slick running freely now as his arousal consumed him. Perhaps Hannibal had been waiting for that confirmation, because he moaned in response and shifted enough to start pressing his cock inside Will.

They were both panting against each other's skin until Hannibal was seated completely within him, flesh to flesh. He leaned his forehead up into Hannibal's shoulder and continued to breathe hard, only hitching a little as Hannibal began to move - long, languid thrusts. He

wanted to ask Hannibal to knot him, but it seemed wrong to use words and break this spell they appeared to be under. But as he felt the alpha start to swell against his rim with each thrust, he couldn't think of anything else. His hands clutched at Hannibal's back and he curled over, to move them down to take hold of his ass instead and pull the alpha forward. It wasn't enough to even change Hannibal's rhythm, but it was enough to communicate his want.

Hannibal seemed to hesitate for a moment, drawing a shaky breath, and Will dug his fingers into the meat of Hannibal's ass in response. Hannibal's breath stuttered and he took in a deep breath before thrusting again. This time he pressed that little further, enough for his knot to catch on Will's rim and draw a sharp breath from the omega. Will whimpered involuntarily as Hannibal thrust slowly forward again, and then again, and the alpha's knot started to squeeze into him. Will panted and let his head fall back, his rim giving a delicious resistance until the knot stretched him and he took pleasure in the burn. And then it was inside him and stretching him wider as it swelled. Will bit back his moan on a gasp as the knot hit against his prostate.

It continued to spark pleasure through him as Hannibal continued thrusting - shallow rocking now that they were locked together. But he continued, on and on until Will was writhing and clutching at his shoulders. Will could feel his orgasm pooling within him and he grabbed Hannibal all the tighter, crying out as he came. Hannibal quickened his thrusts then, fucking into Will until he groaned and spilled within him. They panted against each other's flesh and Will savoured the weight of Hannibal covering him as he was filled with his still hard cock and swollen knot. It was the last thought in his head as he drifted back to sleep with them both still locked together.

*

Will woke naked but with the covers drawn up, a warm and gently breathing body, pressed to his back. Will smiled at the returning memory of the night before, and melted back into Hannibal's arms, sighing softly until he felt the alpha wake and go rigid against him.

Hannibal. He'd had sex with Hannibal.

"This was a mistake," he blurted out, not even knowing whether he meant it, just knowing that Hannibal's reaction to his presence was enough to say it.

"I… I agree," Hannibal replied and released him, moving back and rolling out of the bed. Will could hear him gathering up clothes and felt the need to politely keep his eyes averted.

Will slowly sat, his back still to Hannibal as he scanned the room for his own clothes. When he spotted his jeans he went to them and pulled them on before turning and seeing Hannibal mostly clothed, if dishevelled.

"We shouldn't have…" Will started. He looked up and saw Hannibal's face. There was something in that expression that felt like it could be disgust, or close enough that it angered Will. "You shouldn't have-" he spat the words at Hannibal but was cut off.

“I came here as a friend Will. What was I supposed to do? You asked me to hold you, you asked me to… I didn’t take advantage of you,” Hannibal trailed off with clear exasperation.

“Well, maybe I was vulnerable and you needed to be the voice of reason!” Will countered, pitch rising. He knew he was wrong to say it and that he didn’t really mean it - he had no right to put the whole blame on Hannibal but in that moment he wasn’t his most rational self. He knew it, but it was too late to do anything but stand by his ridiculous words.

“I… Will, we’re friends, I hope we can deal with this reasonably. Perhaps we can talk in a few days. I don’t want to lose our friendship.” Hannibal’s sincerity hurt and Will knew he had already dug himself a big enough hole but he just shook his head and Hannibal continued, changing tack to that professional tone that Will often found somewhere between amusing and annoying. “We need to discuss this Will, so we can move on from it. Friendship can sometimes involve a breach of individual separateness-”

“You're not my friend. The light from friendship won’t reach us for a million years,” Will spat back, his heart breaking as he said it because he knew it was nothing but his own sense of self-preservation driving him. “That’s how far away from friendship we are,” he added quietly as he looked down at his feet. Deep down he knew he was being an asshole, but that was somehow easier than having to deal with all this, which was something he wasn’t able to handle in that moment.

Hannibal didn’t reply. When Will looked up he was alone in the room, and a moment later the front door opened and closed.

February

Chapter by TigerPrawn

Will missed Hannibal.

Christmas and New Year had been lonely for the first time in his adult life. Strange, considering they hadn't even known each that time last year. Maybe in some way he had just started to envisage Hannibal being around for the holidays. Considering how much time they had spent together, it wasn't crazy to think they might have spent some of the holidays together.

He missed the friendship, but he also missed having an alpha around that he could ask for opinions on anything from academia to why all those damn car adverts had to have half naked omegas as standard. He missed the back and forth, he missed the way they had teased each other with playful barbs. He missed their frequent late night phone calls. He missed the way they could talk intellectually and how he never felt like Hannibal thought his ideas were any less valid for being omega.

He missed his scent.

God help him, though he'd only felt the press of it that once when Hannibal had did as he asked and made love to him whilst he attempted a grab at comfort, he missed the weight of the alpha.

And that was the real problem. Before the night of Winston's accident he'd never thought of Hannibal that way. Or so he wanted to believe. Truth was he, of course, hadn't missed how perfect the alpha was. Attractive, wealthy, successful *and* respectful of omegas. He just hadn't imagined himself as the omega meant for that. Maybe in part because he had never expected to find a decent alpha out there. But mostly because he had been so focused on their friendship - so invested in the idea that he could be friends with an alpha who he had so many shared interests and good times with. And they *had* been friends. In a short time, Will had come to count him as his closest friend. But, did their being friends mean it couldn't be something else? Something more?

Will let his head fall forward into his hands as he sat on his bed, Winston resting next to him after another exhausting day of trying to work out running on three legs.

Will sighed heavily. He'd ruined everything. There was no way he could salvage this after how he had treated Hannibal.

He pulled himself from the bed and petted Winston, glad he was tired out so hopefully he'd sleep and not miss Will being gone too much. Doctor Bloom was giving another talk from the same paper she had presented a few months ago which he had attended and enjoyed. He was glad to have even spoken with Doctor Bloom after and it was interesting to hear about her insights given that she was a beta. He couldn't help but think at the time that it was a shame

Hannibal had missed it, he would have found it fascinating. And he couldn't stop thinking that now either.

Though he thought about Hannibal often, he knew it had been worse today because attending the lecture brought him to mind. It probably didn't help that it was only a couple of days since he was last in heat. He had never been that hung up on the idea of being with an alpha for his heat - until now. Which had made it pretty unbearable. It had been the worst heat of his life and he felt like shit for it, but he was determined to attend the lecture and hopefully get chance to chat with Alana Bloom after.

The lecture theatre wasn't too packed - it wasn't a subject that drew the big crowds, much like his own public lectures - and the room was already dark when he took a seat in the front row. It was only a few moments before Bloom started and from then she had his rapt attention.

When she finished speaking and the audience gave polite applause, Will was still scribbling some notes - ideas and questions to inform his own theories on killer omegans.

"I can print my notes if you'd like?" Bloom chuckled as she walked over to him.

"I'd actually appreciate that." Will looked up and grinned at her, and then froze. Most of the audience were filing out, some stopping for a moment to say hello and goodbye in one breath, but one was lingering at Bloom's side - Hannibal. He looked back down at his notes.

Bloom caught his look and raised her brow slightly. "Do you know Doctor Lecter? We're about to grab a coffee to discuss some ideas - you'd be more than welcome to join us."

Will felt his heart racing and his face burn. He hadn't been prepared to see Hannibal, and he cursed himself for not even considering the idea that he might come to this lecture. "No, I…" He stumbled over his words. He wanted to tell her it was a bad idea, that he was an asshole and it would be evil to force Hannibal to endure time with him after what had happened. But in the end he managed to force out a half truth - "I'm sorry, I can't. I have a sick dog and I shouldn't be out too long."

Saying that he stood and started to gather his notes.

"It would be nice to have you there Will, perhaps for a short time?" Hannibal spoke, and there was something in his tone that was unexpected - it wasn't the anger or dislike that Will had assumed. Will looked at Hannibal then and his heart stopped on seeing what might have been eagerness. He didn't know what to make of it, if anything it confused the hell out of him and that must have shown in his face because Hannibal quickly followed with - "But of course, if you need to get back to Winston, you must."

Will nodded, not entirely sure what he was nodding about, but glad to have the out. "Yeah, he… he's doing ok, but I don't like to leave him alone too long, he's still not used to three legs."

Doctor Bloom gave a sympathetic look at that, despite not knowing the entire situation, and Hannibal just nodded. Will found himself nodding again before shoving the papers -

including questions he had for Bloom, which he would now email - into his bag.

He got as far as the door before Hannibal called to him and was immediately at his side. “Will. I… I meant what I said, it would be nice to spend time with you. It would be good to talk. I think we should talk.”

Will swallowed. “Yeah, I guess… I owe you that, I mean… I… But not right now.” He didn’t want to have any conversations about their friendship and what an asshole he had been and, oh by the way I think at some point I may have fallen in love with you, in front of other people.

Will was hit by the thought - finally allowing the realisation to surface, that yes he really had fallen in love with his friend. He felt suddenly nervous - in some way terrified that Hannibal would see the truth of it in his face.

“I have to… I’ve gotta go,” Will mumbled, looking away again and fiddling with the catch on his bag.

“Are you free tomorrow night? I could cook dinner at my house?” Hannibal’s tone was level, almost like he was booking an appointment with a patient. It calmed Will a little, the thought that this would just be an evening of grovelling and being raked over the coals for being an asshole and then they would either be friends or they wouldn’t.

“Sure. Yeah,” Will agreed, looking up and nodding, trying to seem as blase as possible.

Hannibal’s smile felt professional and thin - Will wasn’t sure if he’d imagined the edge of warmth to it. “7.30, then.”

Will didn't realise until he got home that the next day was St Valentine's. He groaned at the thought and wondered, maybe hoped, that the ground would open and swallow him up before then.

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“We should talk about what happened.” Will forced the words out before he lost the nerve.

He had arrived thirty minutes earlier, palms sweaty as he had hesitated over the door bell. Things had been maddeningly polite as Hannibal took his coat, asked after Winston and the other dogs, poured some wine and seated him at the dining table. And now the appetizer sat in front of them and Will knew he couldn’t face a bite of it. He hadn’t been able to sit there and pretend everything was fine or wait for Hannibal to say something.

“I suppose we should,” Hannibal agreed. “I had wanted to call you, but I felt it best to give you space and let you make contact if you so chose. I realise, it being Valentine’s Day, this might not have been the best choice for a reunion - but I couldn’t let the opportunity pass.”

“Well, for my part I'm sorry for the way I treated you, the things I said. I’m sorry.” He knew he looked as contrite as he felt when he looked down at his plate.

“Will.” Hannibal sighed out his name. “In the months we have known each other you have changed my ideas on friendship.” Will looked up when he paused and Hannibal added hesitantly - “It’s the reason that I stopped dating Brian.”

Will cocked an eyebrow, and swallowed. He suddenly felt the need to fill the silence and unfortunately a poor excuse for a joke fell out of his mouth - “Really? I thought it was because he never shut up.” Will almost choked on his own nervous laughter.

“Yes, that too.” Hannibal smirked.

Will took in a shaky breath, suddenly overwhelmed by the situation, the conversation and - yes - that smile. He forced out the only thing that was on his mind in that moment - “I missed you Hannibal. I'll understand if you don't want to, but I'd like to see if we could still be friends.” If that was all he could have he had to have it.

Hannibal’s smile fell and he shook his head very slightly. “I can't do that Will. Friendship won't work for me I-”

Will interrupted, realising he wasn’t able to hear the rejection “I understand. I appreciate you giving me the chance to apologise.” He looked down at his food, unsure whether it was more polite at this point to eat it or leave. He looked back up and tried to work out what to say - should he ask Hannibal what the etiquette of such a situation was?

Hannibal gave him a look that stole all his words before the alpha said - “I want to court you.”

Will wasn’t sure if this was a cruel taunt or a return to their old banter. He wanted to believe the latter and so played along even though he didn't quite feel the humour he tried to put into his reply - “Very funny, Doctor Lecter.”

Hannibal gave him a curious look and then turned away before saying - “I am very serious.”

Will knew he couldn't be, even as everything within him told him the alpha had no reason to lie and he really wouldn't taunt like this. And yet Will couldn't help the smile that spread as his heart skipped a beat, before he got both in check.

And then he shook his head. This couldn't be real. Hannibal must have sensed his disbelief because he reached across and took hold of one of Will’s hands.

“I… was glad to find last night that you had no Valentine's plans.” He paused as though working out how to phrase his words. “I’ve been doing a lot of thinking, Will. And I’ve come to the conclusion that I’m in love with you.”

Will blinked. He hadn’t expected this, despite his own feelings. “And… how do you expect me to respond to this?”

Will’s jaw was slack as he watched the warm and almost lascivious smile spread across Hannibal’s face - “How about, you’re in love with me too?” the alpha replied.

For a moment Will's mouth couldn't form words, which was just fine because his brain couldn't either. And then he huffed - "Well… that was a pretty alpha way to tell me you love me, I didn't peg you for being such a typical alpha"

Hannibal's lips twitched and pulled into a smirk - "on occasion." His lips slowly formed into a warm smile. "Will… I didn't want to lose our friendship by declaring myself, and I tried to never read anything into the way we were with each other. But when you… when we made love, I thought you knew." He looked down at their joined hands. "I'd hoped you knew."

"I…" Will felt terrible. He hadn't known then, hadn't wanted, expected or suspected. He pulled his hand back and buried his face in both hands, shaking his head as he did so. "I'm so sorry Hannibal."

"Sorry that you didn't know, or sorry that you do not reciprocate?" Hannibal asked tentatively.

Will chuckled and looked up, unable to stop the tears welling in his eyes that he thought might be relief or or something similar. "Mostly sorry that I'm a fucking idiot."

Hannibal was eyeing him hungrily and Will had truly, never seen him seem more alpha than in that moment.

Will shook his head at how overwhelming it had become. "I just… this isn't really happening… It's…" he let out a shaky breath but couldn't hold back his grin as he took hold of Hannibal's hand again and then tugged it sharply, bringing the alpha across the table so that he was almost fully on the tabletop. Will licked his lips and tried to suppress his grin as much as possible as he asked - "You're... in love with me?"

Hannibal grinned and pulled Will up so that he was all but on the table too and their lips were barely an inch from each other. "I love you, Will. I love that after spending the day with you I can still smell your scent on my clothes. I love that you're the last person I want to talk to before I go to sleep at night. And it's not because I'm lonely, and it's not because it's Valentine's Day. I wanted you to come here tonight because when you realise that you want to spend the rest of your life with somebody, you want the rest of your life to start as soon as possible."

Will's breath hitched as Hannibal kissed him and pulled him closer until they were both on the table and his plate somehow made it onto the floor with a crash that wasn't enough to pull them apart. Will lost his words completely then and it wasn't until Hannibal had him pinned under his satisfying weight, knot swelling inside him, that Will cried out the feeling that had crept up on him slowly, but undeniably -

"I love you, Hannibal."

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